

Introduction

North Carolina's commercial fisheries have been subjected to a number of different management strategies over the past ten years. Many of these strategies have been implemented to avoid overexploitation, to reduce bycatch or both. Those implemented to avoid overexploitation have been developed for several commercially important species such as blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*), summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*), southern flounder (*P. lethostigma*), red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*), hard clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*), oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) and numerous others (Cheuvront 2002; Diaby manuscript). Those implemented to reduce bycatch include gear restrictions and area closures such as the measures developed to protect sea turtles in Pamlico Sound (Gearhart 2001). However, determining an effective management strategy for a commercial fishery is a difficult and complicated process (Bianchi 2002). Unfortunately, many are often developed without a full understanding of the economic impacts they may have on the fishery's participants (NMFS 1996).

With the passing of the Fisheries Reform Act in 1997 by the North Carolina General Assembly, state level fishery management plans need to be developed by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) for all commercially and recreationally important species (Diaby 1999). The Fisheries Reform Act requires that biological, social and economic data must be utilized in order to develop adequate state fishery management plans (Diaby 1999). These data are necessary to develop management options and to implement management strategies that are appropriate, especially when they are directed at any species, gear, area or any combination of these (Cheuvront 2002; Diaby 2000, manuscript).

A number of studies have been initiated since 1999 in response to the need of socioeconomic information on North Carolina's commercial fisheries (Cheuvront 2002; Diaby 1999, 2000, manuscript). These studies have included an economic profile on North Carolina's commercial fisheries (Diaby 1999) and a series of social and economic analyses of the state's commercial fisheries occurring in Albemarle Sound (Diaby 2000), Pamlico Sound (Diaby manuscript), and Core Sound (Cheuvront 2002). There is also a study currently underway to examine the social and economic importance of the